Small Learning Communities
SLC Design Proposal

submitted to
Los Angeles Unified School District

I. SLC DESIGN PROPOSAL
RECOMMENDATION SIGN-OFF ROUTING SHEET

School Site Council Recommendation to Proceed

Name of School: South East High School

Name of Small Learning Community: Business and Finance University Academy

_____	_____
Principal's signature	Date
_____	_____
UTLA Chapter Chairperson's signature	Date
_____	_____
School Site Council Chairperson 's signature	Date

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II. COVER SHEET

Name of School: South East High School

Location Code: 8881

Proposed SLC Name: Business and Finance University Academy

Design Team Leader

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SOUTH EAST HIGH SCHOOL
BUSINESS & FINANCE
ACADEMY

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IV. LETTER OF INTENT

Dear Committee Members:

This letter of intent is in response to the Los Angeles Unified School District's request for proposals addressing the development of Small Learning Communities.

Teachers of the Business and Finance University Academy have designed a small learning community dedicated to giving our students the chance to develop into capable graduates who will find their careers in the varied private and public business opportunities of the 21st century. Our graduates will be capable in matters of personal finance as they learn business presentation, word processing, and other real world business applications. Students will learn to view business issues in the light of race, gender, culture, economic equity, politics and the environment.

Our priority for the academy is to graduate students who are prepared for both college and career opportunities by helping them fashion their own future as they acquire academic and business skills. The program will also emphasize community involvement, instilling the values of service, commitment, leadership and integrity.

To accomplish this goal we will use effective learning strategies along with parent involvement, community partnerships and intervention to ensure that students are equipped with what is needed to meet their goals for graduation. We intend to provide intervention for those students who need assistance to pass the California High School Exit Exam. We will encourage our students to participate in SAT prep programs that will prepare them to enter the university.

By the time our students graduate we expect them to be confident speakers, effective writers, critical thinkers, and reflective readers and listeners. They will be able to analyze and interpret information, to utilize effective strategies, to solve problems, and demonstrate technological literacy.

The Business and Finance University Academy seeks the advice of all stakeholders whose concern is our students and their achievement. Their input will assist the academy in planning and enriching our students' exposure to the fields of business and finance.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Levin
Lead Teacher, Business and Finance University Academy

IV. SLC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CHECKLIST

The Office of School Redesign will offer professional development and technical support. What are the greatest challenges that you can foresee at this time to completing your work? What assistance do you need? Please check all that apply and attach to your letter of intent.

Foreseeable Challenges	Check All That Apply
Attribute analysis	
Vision creation/identity	
Student outcomes	
Matrix	
School to work transition	
Academic requirements: A-G	
Content integration	
Assessments/evaluation	
Alterations to facilities	
Resilience building	
Youth development strategies	
Advisories	X
Leadership roles	
Bell schedules	
Contract issues/waivers	
Best practices	
Articulation	
Budgets	X
Sustainability	
Community partnerships	X
Parent outreach and involvement	X
Student outreach and involvement	X
School staff Outreach and Involvement	
Union (UTLA) agreements	

V. SLC DESIGN BY ATTRIBUTE:

Defining a Small Learning Community via the Eight Attributes of a SLC

BUSINESS AND FINANCE UNIVERSITY ACADEMY

The Business and Finance University Academy creates a special place for students to learn in a unique program which will incorporate the LAUSD initiatives and the California State Standards.

1. Unifying Vision

The Business and Finance University Academy (BFUA) faculty vision is to develop capable graduates who will find their careers in varied private and public business opportunities of the 21st century. We see our academy as becoming the premiere business SLC attracting students throughout greater Los Angeles.

Our beliefs and values are:

- All students can learn.
- Students can be best prepared for post-secondary education and careers through a well-designed academy curriculum.
- Students can build self-confidence and strong capabilities within our academy to bring success to their careers and personal lives.
- Our students will develop strong ethics and community ties from their academy experience.
- Students will develop and practice critical thinking consistently across all academy courses.

We will foster academic achievement of all students at high levels by providing a safe learning environment and assuring that all students feel included and involved in their educational progress. Once per semester each student will meet with their counselor to discuss their educational plans to ensure that they are moving towards their goals.

BFUA faculty will meet weekly to collaborate on academy wide policies such as guidance, planning of interdisciplinary progress, consistent classroom management and discipline. Faculty will work together to plan professional development and will assist each other in working with individual students. The meetings will assure that the academy faculty shares a consistent educational philosophy. Prior to each culminating activity, faculty will revisit its vision and plan to determine if modifications would better serve our students. Faculty, staff and administration will meet together to use the 4 x 4 schedule for optimal academic achievement, to discuss issues of maintaining “pure” academy classes, and to plan unique business and AP courses. Meaningful staff collaboration will ensure that all BFUA students will achieve academically as well as personally.

The academy currently operates with only the IMA budget. We will need to explore other district funding sources and grants to strengthen our academy's mission. The academy will develop partnerships with employers, two-year colleges, and four-year institutions. We see this as a necessity for our students' success in their postsecondary pursuits.

The location of the vast majority of our teachers within one building has facilitated frequent communication and collegial support. We regard this as an important strength of our academy. We feel that our academy will benefit from an exclusive use resource room located in our hallway for storage and meetings and where a telephone with an outside line can be used to call parents.

2. Identity

The BFUA is composed of a 300 self-selected heterogeneous group of students within a specific physically defined geographical area. They are prepared for skills needed to manage, operate and finance businesses. Students also become capable in matters of personal finance. Core courses are appropriately focused towards real world business applications. Students learn business presentation, word processing and spreadsheets abilities. Personal and business ethics are included, as appropriate, in all courses. Students learn to view business issues in light of race, gender, culture, economic equity, ethics, politics and the environment.

The academy has a unique course, National Foundation For Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) that focuses all aspects of entrepreneurship including business plans, operating a new business, and presentation to investors. Students have opportunities to network with student entrepreneurs throughout the United States and learn from mentors that are active and successful in the business world. Our academy will evaluate the curriculum and add courses such as Advanced Placement (AP) and business electives to meet our students' needs.

Our academy enjoys a distinct physical location on campus. We plan to add emphasis to our space by purchasing banners with our logo and displaying them in our hallways.

All of the academy's courses are standards-based and students are informed daily of standards that are being addressed in each class. We emphasize rigor with high expectations for student performance as exemplified by our academy's culminating projects after each 10 weeks of instruction. Our NFTE students also compete locally and nationally in competitions judged by active business leaders. Our lead teacher, faculty, counselor, and administrator meet regularly to discuss and make decisions regarding budget, personnel and facilities.

The faculty of our academy collaborates to reach decisions regarding student conduct and issues of community safety. We have plans in place for all academy members to meet with an individual student and parent/caregiver if one or more teachers make a request to do so. Issues of community safety are discussed and recommendations made to our administrators.

3. Rigorous Standards-based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

The Business and Finance University Academy (BFUA) is committed to helping students attain their educational and career goals. The goal of BFUA is to help students obtain both a high school diploma as well as acceptance to a post-secondary institution of higher education. In order for students to matriculate to post-secondary education, it is imperative that they have an opportunity to learn in a comfortable and nurturing environment. This is possible through the collaborative model that has been in created between teachers, students, and the support staff with the Small Learning Community (SLC).

Through conferences and meetings, teachers have an opportunity to work with the counseling staff to ensure that students are properly scheduled into their courses. Students will have access to knowledgeable staff in their SLC that will guide them through the graduation process from South East High School. Staff within BFUA will assist students through the admissions process for two and four year universities and career technical education. Our four-year program offers all the classes students need in order to fulfill the A-G requirements:

9th Grade

Introduction to Business
English 9
Algebra I
Health/Life Skills
Computer Literacy
P.E.

10th Grade

Introduction to Business/Business Organization
English 10
Geometry
Biology
World History
Foreign Language

11th Grade

Business Organization
American Literature/Contemporary Composition
Algebra II
Chemistry
US History
Foreign Language

12th Grade

Financial Planning (NFTE—National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship)
World Literature/Expository Composition
Calculus

Physics
US Government/Economics

AP Electives
Language
Literature
US Government
Spanish
Calculus
Statistics

To help integrate the collaborative model of teaching and learning in the BFUA, teachers, along with other colleagues, have created interdisciplinary projects that connect the theme of business and finance. This model allows teachers to share teaching strategies and best practices for classroom instruction and management. These strategies are especially helpful for the wide range of students (general and special education, GATE, ELL) that are a part of the BFUA. Teachers within the academy utilize a number of technological components to drive instruction in the classroom. These components include the use of multimedia software packages such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel; Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) Projectors; Smartboards; access to a student computer lab.

The BFUA is accountable for the production and development of literate, knowledgeable, and well-rounded students that will contribute to the local and surrounding businesses, and to the post-secondary educational community. Teachers must develop instructional materials that are relevant to the BFUA and collaborative in nature.

4. Equity and Access

The BFUA is an ideal place for male and female students to discover the worlds of business and finance and to investigate the opportunities for career pathways. Within the BFUA, all students are afforded the opportunity to explore and to develop their academic, business and finance skills. Again, the goal of the BFUA is to help students obtain both a high school diploma as well as acceptance to a post-secondary institution of high education. Students who are interested in business and finance are welcomed into the program and given full opportunity to participate in all aspects. The current enrollment for the Business and Finance Academy is approximately 300 students, which includes many special education students. Every effort is expended to place the student in the courses that they, and their parents/guardians, have requested, and which will facilitate both their graduation and career goals. The BFUA team meets weekly in order to review students' progress, and to modify the program when necessary.

Students in our academy are diverse in background and ability. To address this diversity, teachers in the BFUA utilize appropriate strategies in their teaching. These strategies include peer tutoring, individual instruction, group work, visual and auditory reinforcement, Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) methodology, scaffolding, and many techniques. Within this philosophy, students are given the opportunity to take AP and

Honor's classes. Teachers utilize many different methods to instruct students of varying English language abilities. The use of SDAIE techniques is prevalent in the local community. Materials which need to be given to parents and to the larger community are translated into Spanish, the predominant language for many of the adults in the community. During the weekly BFUA faculty meetings, teachers discuss the development of programs that will reinforce the culture of the students, and expose all students to a wide variety of different cultures. Most core courses are located within a contiguous space, and plans are in the works to identify the BFUA as a unique space with its own classrooms, faculty office, and areas in which students can feel "at home." We are in the process of trying to secure BFUA signs to designate boundaries of our academy.

We are fortunate to have a diverse, unique, highly – qualified, and agreeable group of educators, committed to the success of the academy and its students.

5. Personalization

The BFUA is a small learning community of approximately of 300 students that provides a personalized curriculum within a community of teachers, parents, a counselor, an administrator and other stakeholders in our community.

The City of South Gate is unique in the Los Angeles area since it is an older city with many citizens who have lived there for generations. The local businesses want to help their schools. We want to capitalize on the feelings of community and make those ties valuable to our students.

The small learning community is used to allow our faculty to treat our students as distinct individuals. We will monitor their progress and plan adjustments to their programs to assure that each student member of our academy achieves academic success. The faculty will incorporate lessons that address multiple intelligences, students' personal experiences and culture. Different student learning styles will be identified and appropriate scaffolding implemented. To fulfill the A-G requirements, students will complete a rigorous course of instruction. Students will enroll in core educational courses (i.e. English, Math, Science, and Social Studies), along with elective courses such as Financial Planning, Sales, Business Organizations, Introduction to Business, Business Law, and Bank Credit.

The staff's goal of the individualized program is to make the student feel a part of the program with less likelihood of alienation or indifference. It is hoped that the personalization will reduce the drop-out rate and improve consistent attendance. Students have the opportunity to establish a positive rapport with the faculty over their four year high school experience.

One program for transitioning freshman into the school is our school's summer "bridge" program. At least one of our faculty members will teach this program to help middle school students adjust to and thrive in the high school environment. This program builds math and English skills needed for the freshman curriculum but also includes community building activities such a field trips and special fun activity events.

Our 4 x 4 block schedule allow our faculty to become more accessible to and knowledgeable about each individual student. Instead of the traditional 180 students per day that a teacher instructs in one day, a much smaller total number of students per day allows faculty more time and opportunities to develop stronger relationships with students and their families. This also affords teachers to foster relationships that can be maintained for multiple years.

6. Accountability and Distributed Leadership

The BFUA is comprised of an administrator, a counselor, a lead teacher, and a faculty of nine instructors. BFUA faculty have a variety of leadership positions including membership on the School Site Council (SSC), School Decision Making Council (SDMC), New Teacher Training program, Athletic Coaches, Special Education Consultants, and Department Chairpersons. The school leaders work together in the overall decision making process of the BFUA as well as in other school wide issues. The academy will use the SLC Self-Assessment Rubric to hold itself accountable in making progress toward reaching benchmark goals.

To insure that the BFUA focuses on student needs and achievement, parents and members of the community provide input that allows the academy to create ongoing development and training of teachers. In addition to parent volunteers, the academy has welcomed participation and partnership from community members. The BFUA members, along with community partners and parents will work together to determine allocation of the BFUA budget, concerning field trips, equipment, supplemental materials, and supplies.

Counselors are involved in devising a four-year academic plan for students. Counselors individually visit classrooms to ensure personalized student accountability of goals and objectives and address all transition goals.

Several information methods are available to the BFUA Faculty, students, and parents through monthly correspondence in forms of memos, web page, parent letters, and email accessibility.

7. Collaboration and Parent/Community Engagement

The BFUA will continue to build upon partnerships with community members, employers, postsecondary institutions and other necessary elements to implement them into our academy. The BFUA is a Small Learning Community (SLC) that interfaces with business owners and prominent figures from the local community, as well as employees from major corporations. These hands on activities will afford our students an opportunity to develop and maintain personalized relationships with key leaders in the business world.

One of the outside relationships that we have developed is the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE). The goal of this program is to train and mentor students on ways to create a business plan that they can see to fruition once the program is completed. Further, students have the chance to participate in NFTE's National Business Plan Competition with students from all over the country. The winners of the competition will

receive an initial investment that will assist students in financing their business. During the NFTE course, Business Plan coaches are invited into class to help students generate ideas, work on the financial portion of the plan, assist with the marketing strategies, and other various tasks that need to be performed. Parents and Business Plan coaches are invited to watch the Business plan presentations in the school auditorium, as well as the finals held at an off campus facility.

The local community will also contribute to the development of students within BFUA. Parents will become key collaborators and contributing members to the BFUA through academy showcases, parent-teacher conferences, coffee with the academy, parental volunteers, and establishing an effective relationship with the parent center.

8. Professional Development

The Business and Finance University Academy believes that professional development is directly linked to student success. This recognition results in emphasis upon individual and group staff development which includes meetings, collaboration between departments, alignment of instruction, and assessment of both student and curriculum. The 4x4 schedule allows the Business and Finance University Academy teachers, counselor, and administrator to meet once a week for 90 minutes during our common planning period. This common planning period affords teachers structured and organized time to discuss their work, while monitoring and evaluating student progress. Teachers have and continue to work diligently on interdisciplinary culminating projects for our academic and elective subjects. For example, our business courses all end with a power-point presentation. To help prepare for that presentation, the social studies teacher discusses the economic climate of the time. The English teachers have several oral assignments during the year to prepare students to speak with fluency in front of the class. We have been working to include the science and math teachers into our culminating projects. They now include how the business world uses math and science as the students study each unit, but haven't been able to be fully included. One problem has been the lack of pure BFUA sections. The counseling staff has been working to achieve a better balance of Business and Finance students in all our classes.

Our academy aligns our lessons and instructions with the California Content Standards. Our academy often discusses the need for rigor in all of our lessons. We want to develop challenging instruction that will engage our students and improve their achievement. Next year, the lead teacher will attend a Critical Friends Group (CFG) leadership institute to learn how to establish student learning goals in the academy. The protocols learned through CFG will be shared with the academy teachers so that we may engage in reflective dialogue around student achievement.

BFUA will create professional development activities that align with the goals and mission of the academy. We will investigate opportunities for professional growth through field trips and discussions around the theme of business and finance.